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THE YOUNG BARON OF LIEBERACH.

A GREAT many years ago—some hundreds, for aught I know—there lived a proud and puissant baron, named Rodolph von Lieberach, in whom a good many of the virtues, and all the vices, of his race seemed combined. His life was passed in his castle, in a sort of semi-barbarous retirement, except when foreign wars called him abroad; and the sudden change from the bustle of the field then made him sombre and gloomy for many weeks at a time. In his youth he had spent much time abroad, and had for two years served in the armies of the Greek emperor, at Constantinople, in whose service he had won much honour, but little reward. While in the capital of the Eastern empire he had seen and loved the fair daughter of a certain Greek noble attached to the court, and when he proffered her his hand, her father and the emperor compelled her to accept it, because they feared to offend the rude Frank warrior, though she loved him not. But, alas, what a change for her!

About a mile from the city, a luxurious villa stood on a rising ground overlooking the Bosphorus. Spacious gardens stretched from the house to the shore, perfumed by the surrounding orange groves, and shaded by the citron and olive trees which overhung the calm water, as if longing to kiss it. A fountain played in the centre, and arbours at every corner invited to ease and retirement, while the nightingale sang all day long in the branches overhead. The rarest plants and flowers of Europe and of Asia grew side by side, and in every sight and sound there were music and beauty. The interior of the house was in keeping with the garden. Gorgeous tapestry—couches radiant with gilding, and covered with the richest silks which Venetian enterprise brought from the mysterious East,—busts of the ancient philosophers of Greece, and of the early martyrs of Christianity—piles of manuscripts richly illuminated, and written by cunning hands—small marble fountains to cool the hot winds from the desert—verandahs in which the inmates might sit at eventide to inhale the refreshing breezes from the water, and hear the barking of the dogs, the laughter of children, and the song of lovers from the farther shore,—met the eye on every side. Here the youth of Agatha Kale was passed. She was the only child of her father, and he was a widower. She had been carefully educated by an old priest, who had retained a large leaven of the ancient philosophy mingled with the doctrines of the Christian religion. Plato and Pythagoras had shared his attention with Paul and the early fathers. He had not fallen into any of the extravagancies or corruptions which time and foreign influence had mixed up in the bosom of the church. He had too much of the fine sentiment of the beautiful to let one gross thought pass between him and the objects of his love and adoration; but he had in him too much of the pride of philosophy to become a missionary or a martyr. He was a priest because it gave him opportunities of indulging his love of literary research, without coming in contact with any of the common cares and passions of life; but he had little of the ardour of devotion which reigned amongst the common people. He was in fact born out of his time, and spent many an hour in bitter regrets that it had not fallen to his lot to mingle in the solemn groups who a thousand years before had sauntered in abstraction amidst the groves of the Academy. He undertook the task of Agatha's education with joy; it gave him an opportunity of moulding a human being after his own mental image—to reproduce his own thoughts and aspirations, and regrets in a mind to which everything was new. Teaching was not to him the wearisome drudgery which so many now regard it, but an art which Socrates had ennobled. Under his tuition Agatha grew up all he could wish her, refined, speculative, fond of reading, and prone to doubt, but holding all that she embraced with tenacity, and defending it with subtlety. She grew up a model of Greek beauty—that beauty which had lent inspiration to the chisel of Praxiteles, and the pencil of Apelles, a thousand years before, when Greece was in its prime, and which then, and ever since, has been con-

tinually reproduced, as if it clung to the soil, when "living Greece" is no more. The high arched head, the lofty forehead, the straight nose, the thin delicate lips, the energy in the lines of the mouth, the smouldering fire in the soft light of the dark eye, bridged over by brows black as ebony, the swan-like throat intersected by veins "like streams through fields of snow," the graceful, wavy outline of the figure, which had never known an hour of constraint, and the soft, white roundness of the arms, were all Greek. The priest Demetrius took care the intellect should be Greek too. Every evening, from the time when she reached her fifteenth year until her marriage, the old man tottered into the garden two or three hours before sunset; and, sitting in the arbour, with a volume of the *Republic*, or the *Phædo* open before them, they talked over the anticipated Christianity of Socrates, the sweet-souled piety of Cimon, the patriotism of Epaminondas, and examined the fabrics of speculation which had in later years been built upon the Gospel, until the sun sank into the blue waves of the *Ægean*, and with his last rays turned the waters of the Hellespont into gold. During the last year they were together, their conversations assumed unconsciously a tone of sadness. Dire calamities were hanging over them. The Turks had come down from their mountains, fiery and fanatical, and threatened to beleaguer the imperial city, and extirpate the Christian faith. Strange rumours were abroad. The emperor held councils by night, and from these Agatha's father returned anxious and thoughtful. What if their dreams and happiness should end under the scimitar of the barbarian, their faith in their own doctrines be rudely tested by torture and violence, and their names added to the long list of martyrs and confessors! From this time their conversations, as well as their thoughts, turned more upon themselves—upon the discipline of their own hearts—more upon their feelings and less upon opinions and doctrines. They were often sad and tearful, but oftener far, hopeful and courageous. The old priest had not lived so long a life, with great thoughts and great examples constantly before him, without being able to rise to the level of the heaviest misfortune or calamity; and his precepts availed so well, that at length, amidst the wars, rumours of wars, fears, and misgivings which agitated all hearts in the great city, the only spot where calmness reigned was the summer-house of the senator's garden.

Thus matters stood, when the sorrowful morning arrived on which she was arrayed in bridal dress, and stood before the altar to be united for life to the Latin knight. Demetrius married them. His snowy beard seemed to quiver on his chest, and his voice faltered as he pronounced the church's blessing on their heads. His farewell was calm and solemn.

On that evening the bride and bridegroom were rowed on board the galley in the harbour, and Agatha, standing on the deck, saw the palaces and spires of Constantinople, and the vine-clad hills above it, slowly fade from her view for ever.

When the honeymoon was over, her life in her husband's castle became weary enough. He was not a man after her heart; their tastes were not congenial. The summer brought pleasant walks in the woods, and rambles along the banks of the neighbouring stream, but neither summer nor winter brought back the sunny skies and loved friends amongst whom her youth had been passed. They had one son, born the second year after their marriage; and when he was but three years old his father died suddenly.

Time wore on. Agatha was becoming an old woman, and Hugo her son a young man. He had reached his nineteenth year; was skilled in the martial exercises of the Germans, and well taught in all the lore of the Greeks, generous to a fault, ardent in his love as in his hate, fiery and proud. She died before he had attained his majority. When she was on her death-bed she called him to her side, and gave him a box, containing a small phial, informing him that it was the gift of a certain Jewish rabbi, whom she had once succoured when pursued by a mob, and who, on giving it, had

told her that if the liquid it contained were drunk by her, or those nearest and dearest to her, when in their greatest earthly need or peril, a way of deliverance would be speedily pointed out to them. With a romantic trust in the marvellous, which was quite in unison with the enthusiasm of her character, she had preserved it carefully, and never having been placed in such a position herself as in her opinion to call for its use, she bequeathed it as a legacy to him whom she most loved, and in whose path most snares and dangers were likely to lie. In some petty wars which followed he was driven from his ancestral domains, and placed under the ban of the empire for taking part with the burghers of an adjacent town against the nobles. For several days he found shelter in the cottage of one of his vassals; but at last, fearing to involve his faithful follower in danger, he left his retreat, and sallied forth to find aid and refuge where he could the wide world over.

After undergoing various toils and anxieties, and passing through sundry "hair-breadth escapes," he arrived in Paris, and for awhile, with characteristic thoughtlessness, abandoned himself to all the dissipations of that metropolis, which was then, as now, the gayest and most frivolous on earth. But his funds were soon exhausted. Those who at first smiled upon him, in deference to his birth and his romantic career, began to look on him coldly, or avoid him, and he was at last driven to cast about for some course of life that would afford him the means of subsistence. He was one evening musing mournfully in his lodgings upon his position and prospects, when he bethought him of the phial, and coming to the conclusion that he could never be in greater straits than he was then, he drank of its contents. He instantly fell into a deep sleep—a sleep as deep as death—and saw a vision. He was walking, or dreamed he was walking, along a broad avenue bounded on each side by lawns of surpassing verdure. The gnarled oaks, green with the moss of a century, threw their broad branches across the path, and streaked it with shadow. A refreshing breeze sighed gently through the leaves, and played amongst his hair, and at a little distance a brook ran parallel with his course, and, though hidden from his view, murmured gently and musically in his ear. In the trees overhead birds of the rarest plumage sang in strains of more than earthly melody, without a single pause, and it seemed to his enraptured senses as if there was hope and courage in every note. A grateful perfume seemed to pervade the atmosphere. And far away in the long vista a bright lake appeared dancing in the sunshine, with waterfowl of snowy whiteness gliding gently and gracefully over its surface. He was enchanted. His blood coursed swiftly through his veins; his heart throbbed with rapturous excitement. It seemed as if he could never grow tired of wandering here.

He walked on thus the greater part of a day, but to his astonishment he at last began to perceive that he was making no progress. The lake seemed still as far away as ever, the same trees grew by his side, the same brook murmured in his ear, and the same birds sang overhead. Little by little he found all those features of the scenery which had at first given him so much pleasure begin to pall upon his senses. The perfume seemed to sicken and enervate him; the voice of the birds sounded heavy and dull. He longed wearily for a mountain side, with a clear prospect, a refreshing breeze, and where at least he would find the fruits of his labour in making some progress on his way, and meeting some change of scene. Pondering over the time he had lost, and the strange position in which he found himself, he sat down upon a mossy stone by the way-side. Absorbed in reverie, a voice whispered in his ear, clear as a trumpet, but he knew not from whence it came. The tone seemed to be his own but he had not opened his lips. In energetic accents, but mournfully, reprovingly, and persuasively, it seemed to say:

"Thou art treading in a perilous path. Delights are on either side of thee, but danger and destruction are ever in front. Turn boldly to the right, pass through the wood, follow the road that leads up yon hill, and at the top thou shalt find rest and peace."

Rising in obedience to a sudden impulse, he pushed boldly forward in the direction which had been indicated to him. He soon found himself in the highway. Great numbers of men were travelling along the same road. Some were strong, vigorous, and hardy—a flush of hope, courage, and ardour in their cheeks, and their eyes ever looking upwards. Others seemed faint and weary, as if they were unused to the work, and tottering feebly seemed ever prone to lie down and rest, and think no more of ascending. And, alas! at every step were the prostrate forms of those who had fallen and perished with the smile of expectation on their lips, and manly vigour in every limb. Some appeared to have sunk only after a long struggle and had left heavy footprints in the dust; and their features had scarcely yet lost the scowl of the combat, and settled into the dread composure of everlasting rest. But others seemed to have fallen almost without an effort,—terrible wrecks, like

"Ships that have gone down at sea,
When heaven was all tranquillity."

These last formed by far the greater number. Hugo prayed inwardly to be preserved from such a fate, and now that he travelled in company, and that the eyes of many were upon him, he determined to strike them by the fiery impetuosity of his onward march. But the ascent was steep and rugged, the sun shone fiercely upon his head, and upon turning round to look for sympathy he saw no look of pity for his faltering steps, and received no offer of aid. All were intent upon themselves. Weary and disheartened, he at last sat down by the wayside, and, leaning his head upon his hand, wept bitterly.

While in this predicament, those with whom he started upon his journey passed on, leaving him behind alone. He abandoned himself to despair; a black curtain seemed to hang between him and the future, shutting out all hope of rest and peace. He raised his head, half-mechanically, and glanced vacantly along the road he had traversed. A figure appeared in the distance approaching rapidly; a little nearer, and Hugo's attention was riveted upon it. It was a man in the prime of life, tall and athletic in appearance, and bearing in his face every mark of great internal strength. A broad and open forehead, on which thought had ploughed some furrows, was half covered by luxuriant hair, which waved carelessly in the fitful breeze that now and then blew up the valley. There was fire in his dark eyes, subdued by many a year of meditation and watching; in the thin nostrils and firmly-set mouth there were traces of energy which had gathered fresh strength with every roll of time, and now seemed to hurl defiance at the world and at fortune. His figure was such as the sculptor would love to copy. There were united all that collection of excellencies in each part which are said never to have been seen together save in the statues of the ancient artist—the sinewy limbs, the broad shoulders and expansive chest, that seemed able to fling off the heaviest load of grief that ever fell on mortal man, with one impetuous heave. There was no sign of faltering in that rapid stride and firm tread which seemed to claim the ground they measured for their own, and no backward shrinking in the lofty glance that was ever fixed on the hill top, save when he looked hastily and half carelessly aside, as if to measure his progress. Onward and upward he came, and at last stood for a moment silent and thoughtful before Hugo. At length he passed over, and laid his hand on his shoulder:

"Young man, thou art wearied and worn," said he; "but knowest thou not that delay is death? He who lingers here, goes backward."

"Leave me, I pray thee," said Hugo, "and continue thy way, friend. I can go no further."

"Nay, I will not leave thee; I have been as thou art, and have overcome my weakness; I have gained all my present strength from striving, and now find it holy and joyous to be strong; by persevering here, I have gained the power to persevere farther; by daring I have gained courage; by refusing to despair I have found my hopes fulfilled. Come on with

me; I will teach thee to do as I have done, and then thou shalt become such as I am. On the summit of yonder hill, all the brave, and wise, and good, who have, since the world began, battled for truth and justice and humanity, and died for them, await our coming. It needs no brilliant exploit to qualify thee for admission to commune with them. They

us go; when thou art weary let thy courage avail thee. If thou hast none, thou art not worthy of the goal to which thou aspirest."

And Hugo awoke, and behold it was a dream.

* * * * *

Fifty years afterwards an old man died in Paris, a priest of



HUGO WEARY BY THE WAYSIDE.

heed not thine abilities, but thy courage, thine aspirations, and thine acts. All that thou doest, do well; march right onward, and let not this dread weariness any longer detain thee. Shed no more tears on the barren wayside; keep them for the sorrows and weaknesses of others, and they shall make the ground beneath thy feet blossom as the rose. Arise, and let

great reputation. The poor wept in crowds outside the doorway, and followed him sorrowing to his grave. The learned said a star was gone from the constellation of genius and intellect; and even the reformers, who declaimed against the Romanist clergy, extolled his virtues, his piety, faith, hope, and charity, and said, "Would that all were like him!"